

THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
CLOSE UP FOUNDATION**HON. DON YOUNG**

OF ALASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 12, 1996

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, I want to call the attention of my colleagues to a very special event that is taking place, the 25th Anniversary of the Close Up Foundation.

As many of you know, the Close Up Foundation is the largest civic education organization in the country. It has not always been that way, when Close Up started 25 years ago their first program included 25 participants from 14 States. Today, Close Up brings approximately 25,000 participants annually to Washington, DC, on their various programs. They have participants from all 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Pacific Island territories.

These achievements are of themselves enough to make an organization and those who have supported it very proud; however, it does not stop there. Close Up has remained true to its mission over these 25 years. Their focus has been on efforts to be all inclusive and reach students who are underserved, either because of their economic, cultural, or geographic isolation. I am personally familiar with the difference Close Up has made to those who are geographically isolated.

Since 1979, more than 9,200 Alaska students and educators have participated in Close Up's programs. In 1987, Close Up began an effort to focus on including Alaska Native students in the Washington, D.C. High School Program. Since that time, approximately 685 Alaska Native students have taken part in the Close Up program. These students, from every corner of Alaska including our most remote villages, come to Washington and mix with their peers both from within Alaska and throughout the United States. While they are here, they are able to contribute to as well as learn from the diverse population of Close Up's student participants. By including Alaska Native students, young people, who rarely, if ever, have been outside of their villages, get the opportunity to expand their civic literacy as well as learn about the rest of the country and its citizens. We, in Alaska, are very proud of the input all of our Alaskan students bring to their peers from the rest of the country.

The contribution made by Alaska's students and educators takes many shapes, including returning to Alaska to become involved in and to organize Close Up local programs. These local programs provide civic education opportunities for all members of the community not just those students who were lucky enough to get to Washington, DC, to benefit from the Close Up experience. In this way, the Close Up message of informed, responsible citizenship is multiplied many times over to the great benefit of my State and the country.

In this time of distrust and cynicism, Close Up's program works to break down suspicion and to show high school students that government is relevant to their lives and important to them as citizens. With the recent disturbing results of a study of peoples' public opinion of Congress and the Government, we, as elected officials, should make it our goal to raise student interest in government because the future of this Nation depends on their civic involvement.

As we all know, Close Up's message of civic involvement is directed toward all students, not just the academic elite or the affluent. The federally funded Ellender Fellowship Program, along with Close Up generated fellowship funds, has made the Close Up civic learning opportunity a reality for students who would not otherwise be able to afford a trip to Washington, DC. In Alaska, students from families with limited means face an additional hurdle of very high travel costs. The Ellender fellowships help to level the playing field and provide civic educational opportunities to many students who might otherwise be overlooked or left behind.

Mr. Speaker, I have been a longtime supporter of the Close Up Foundation, and I am delighted to be able to send my heartiest congratulations to them on the celebration of their 25th anniversary. The congratulations are for a job well done, and one I hope will continue for another 25 years.

AN EASY WAY TO REDUCE MAIL
FRAUD**HON. BRUCE F. VENTO**

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 12, 1996

Mr. VENTO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce legislation, the Mail Fraud Prevention Act, which will serve to increase the security of mail delivery for every individual who relies on the services of the U.S. Postal Service [USPS].

Current policies at the USPS allow an individual or household to change their address, and therefore forward their mail, to a new location simply by filling out a form and submitting it to the USPS. The forms can even be mailed to the postal service. This policy certainly makes service delivery more fluid for the estimated 42 million individuals or households who move and file mail forwarding orders each year. That convenience, however, has a price. That price may well be the security of personal and financial information delivered by the USPS to individuals and families across the Nation.

Because the USPS does not verify that the person submitting the forwarding order actually resides at the original address before processing the order and rerouting mail, criminals can fraudulently forward another individual or household's mail to a new address. The only information needed to submit a fraudulent forwarding order is the old address and a signature, which can be forged since the USPS does not check the identity of the individual at the time it accepts the completed form.

This policy gives criminals easy access to vital personal and financial information of every USPS customer, virtually every household in the Nation. Once bank account, credit card, or Social Security numbers fall into the hands of the thieves, it does not take long for them to drain finances and destroy credit histories that took a lifetime of fiscal planning and saving to build. The USPS estimates that 1,000 people annually are victimized by this form of postal fraud.

To the credit of the USPS, they do eventually attempt to verify mail forwarding orders; however, this action comes only after the mail

has been rerouted. The USPS mails letters to both addresses, new and old, telling residents that a forwarding order has been processed in their name. The flaw in this system, however, is that in the days or weeks it takes to send these verification notices, mail flows to the new address, sending sensitive and valuable information into the hands of the fraudulent filers.

The USPS has a responsibility to provide the highest level of security to its customers, and current policy regarding changes in address clearly ignores that responsibility. That is why I am introducing this legislation on the issue. This measure would require the USPS to check the identification of individuals submitting change of address forms at the time the form is submitted, before mail is rerouted. Only forms that are submitted by residents of the original address will be processed.

There is an exception for homebound individuals and others who would have a difficult time getting to a USPS branch to submit the form, although the bill requires the USPS to develop policies to increase the security of these individuals' mail delivery as well. By verifying an individual's identity before mail is actually forwarded, criminals have less opportunity to access personal or financial information. With so many personal and financial documents being sent through the mail in today's society, we must ensure that these documents are as safe as we can make them. This legislation would take a large bite out of postal fraud crime and go a long way in increasing the security of mailed documents and information.

TRIBUTE TO THE LEDYARD HIGH
SCHOOL GIRLS SOFTBALL TEAM**HON. SAM GEJDENSON**

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 12, 1996

Mr. GEJDENSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend the Ledyard High School girls softball team which has won four consecutive State championships, most recently on June 8, when it defeated Amity by a score of 4 to 3 in the finals.

Coached by Ellen Mahoney, a member of the school's faculty, Ledyard's program has compiled a remarkable record since it was started at the club level in the 1970's. The school has posted five State championships in the 1990's and had undefeated seasons in 1991 and 1993. This year saw yet another undefeated season, with an amazing record of 26 to 0, and a first place finish in the Hartford Courant's poll of girls' softball teams in Connecticut. Ledyard's record in the 1990's is a remarkable 165 victories and 10 losses. During the regular season this spring, the team compiled 16 shutouts in 20 games and allowed only 17 runs in the year's entire 26 game campaign.

Coach Mahoney says a dedicated coaching staff, fan support, and commitment from the kids contribute to the success of the Ledyard program.

The wonderful record of the girls softball team is one of the many elements on the academic and athletic fronts that makes Ledyard High School the excellent institution that it is.